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AUTHOR Niles, Margaret A.
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ABSTRACT

This report presents the thoughts and impressions of an American student who participated in a series of eight debates on U.S.-Soviet relations held in the Soviet Union. The first section of the paper is devoted to the purpose of and preparations for the debates, which focused on the topics of war and peace in the two societies' systems of values, and were held in Leningrad, Baku, Valvograd, Kiev, and Tartu. In the second section, details of the debates are discussed. The third portion of the paper provides accounts of tours of the cities of Leningrad, Valvograd, Baku, and Kiev. The paper concludes with reflections and opinions about the trip. (DF)

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U.S. - U.S.S.R. DEBATE:

ON THE ROAD TO

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Margaret A. Niles

Directed Research
under
Professor John Barton

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PREFACE

In writing this paper, I have had the opportunity to seriously evaluate this debate trip to the Soviet Union. And after seeing the documentary about the trip, I have had the opportunity to discuss with friends and strangers my thoughts and impressions. Both processes have helped make this trip a most valuable learning experience; I feel that I have learned more than on previous trips because I have tried to draw conclusions about Soviets and the Soviet society. Writing the paper and discussing the film have given me new insights and new perspectives, which I hope to use in future study of--and on future visits to--the Soviet Union.

INTRODUCTION

In October, 1982, I participated in a series of eight debates in the Soviet Union on the topic of war and peace in our societies' systems of values. Although it was my fourth trip to the Soviet Union, this two-week tour through six cities gave me new insights into Soviet life. In particular, I was impressed more than before with the significance of the Great Patriotic War to the Soviets, and with the Soviet perspective on the individual's role in society. In the ten-minute speech I delivered as part of each debate, I emphasized that, although Americans and Soviets have widely divergent views on the individual's role in influencing the politics of war and peace, we share a common desire for peace. I still believe that the goal of peace is universal, but I have serious doubts about the individual Soviet citizen's ability to promote that goal--largely because Soviets are for the most part content to leave such issues to their government.

I. EXPECTATIONS

A. Purpose

The topic "war and peace" is so broad yet so fundamentally important that it was hard to know what to expect--how to prepare for the debates, and what point to try to get across. Because of previous trips to the Soviet Union, especially an eight-month stint as a guide/translator on a U.S. International Communications Agency exhibit called "Agriculture U.S.A.", I felt that I had a basic idea of <u>what</u> Soviets think about the U.S. and <u>how</u> they think about us. But my confidence had been somewhat eroded by my current status as a law student: I felt out of touch with world events and particularly with Soviet news; and my Russian was sorely in need of practice.

In preparation, at first I frantically tried to read all of recent history, to accumulate, digest, and reconcile the complete diversity of American opinion (for convenience in this paper, I will use "American" interchangeably with "U.S.") on issues of war and peace. Finding information was easy, but reading and understanding it all is of course an endless task. And reconciling the wide variety of American views into a single American view is impossible. How, for example, could I deal with the disturbing position taken by some fellow students interested in international affairs, that American young people have a perverse fascination for nuclear war and welcome the option it offers for resolving the world's problems?! I finally realized that I could not even hope to represent the American point of

view because there is no such thing. But I could be a representative: My personal point of view is one example of the many American points of view. In fact, rather than a weakness, my inability to present "the American viewpoint" was a strength. I changed my speech in order to draw attention to this diversity of views. I hoped not only to give myself credibility by claiming to present only the personal views of "a simple American", but also to emphasize the high value American society places on having a diversity of views.

The fact that I was presenting my own individual perspective, which does not necessarily coincide with the perspective of any other American, even our president, epitomized the general point I wanted to get across: Our system values the individual's role in influencing the factors that determine war and peace. My emphasis on the individual's importance was not unique; both of my fellow debaters, John Tokolish and Bill Skundrich, also emphasized in their speeches the individual's importance in American politics. Although Americans may not always appreciate and take advantage of the opportunities we have to influence our government, we do have such opportunites. And those opportunities are not mere empty promises written down in something called a Constitution; they are living traditions.

American opportunities for citizens to influence the government differ from Soviet opportunities in two fundamental ways. First, American civil liberties, such as the rights of free speech and press, are limited only by the need to respect either U.S. national security interests or the rights of other Americans. Society imposes few restrictions on individual

rights, and the Constitution itself explicitly prohibits restrictions: "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." U.S. Const. amend. I. The only limitations are those necessarily arising due to the exigencies of international affairs and the equal rights of other citizens. In contrast, the Soviet Constitution qualifies its grant of civil rights: "[E]xercise of rights and liberties by citizens must not injure the interests of society and the state or the rights of other citizens." U.S.S.R. Const. art. 39, cl. 2 (1977). In short, on its face and as interpreted, the Soviet Constitution limits individual rights and thus limits the ability of individuals to influence their government. The second difference is that in practice U.S. citizens actively enjoy their individual rights and liberties to a degree that enables them to have actual impact on government decisionmaking in foreign and domestic affairs that affect war and peace, whereas Soviet citizens do not. The U.S. pattern is based on a traditional distrust of government and refusal to be controlled by it; the Soviets have no such tradition but instead trust their government to make what Americans consider to be fundamentally individual decisions.

Although my emphasis on the individual was mirrored by John's and Bill's, I presented the point differently than they did. Their speeches dealt with specific events in Soviet and U.S. history, holding our histories up against each other in a comparison that could not but antagonize. Since this was a debate on war and peace, and since the Soviet teams did not

hesitate to attack specifics of U.S. policy with equal antagonism, John's and Bill's approach was not inappropriate.

But I chose to avoid specifics and accusations, for a number of reasons. First, as mentioned above, I lacked confidence in my knowledge of recent history. Although it would have been easy enough to assure myself of the accuracy of my pre-written speech, questions in reaction to anything specific I might have said could have caught me unprepared. More importantly, however, I did not want to lower my discussion to a specific level. Certainly, Stalinism, U.S. involvement in El Salvador, and numbers of missiles are not trivial matters; but they are particular foreign policy issues that can only be decided by the powers that conduct foreign policy. Our audiences did not comprise such policymakers, I could not hope to affect Soviet foreign policy by condemning Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. But I could--and do--hope to have some influence by suggesting that individual citizens should have the right to speak out publicly for or against their government's foreign policy. I wanted to discuss not the particular substance of foreign affairs, but the general procedure by which an individual can affect them. A third reason for avoiding specifics is that I did not want to put my audience on the defensive. I know from my ICA experience with Soviets--and from common sense about any group--that one cannot get an audience to look critically at itself by throwing its faults in its face. By describing American procedures for individual influence on government, I hoped to lead the audience to examine and question the realities of its own society's opportunities for individual impact. A final

reason was that mud-slinging is just not in my nature; if I really wanted to establish credibility by presenting my personal views rather than any conglomeration of American views, I had to do so in my own style.

The result was a good strategy in terms of team presentation: John spoke first, criticizing Soviet society fairly strongly and getting the audience to sit up and listen; then I spoke, taking a less critical and more general approach and hoping to get the audience to think; Bill came in for the kill, letting loose with a hard-hitting, no-pulled-punches attack on Soviet politics, and condemning the Soviet system as essentially a revision of tsarist totalitarianism into modern Communist totalitarianism. Whether or not it was effective for the group, for me the pattern--combined with the less antagonistic nature of my speech, my sometimes halting Russian in response to questions, and the fact that I was the only female on the American team (and often the only female on either team)--sometimes had an unfortunate effect. The audiences did not always take me seriously; at least, they did not direct to me as many of the tough questions. After the first few debates, however, I made sure to assert myself and show that I had not come merely to exchange pleasantries.

B. Preparation

In addition to trying to identify our purposes, we gathered for three days in Pittsburgh to prepare ways to give effect to those purposes. In what seemed like marathon practice sessions,

we discussed international and domestic affairs, trying to figure out responses to the tough questions we undoubtedly would face. But this did not mean coming up with any "right" or pro-American answers. We just wanted to become familiar with handling hard questions--for example, about U.S. involvement in Vietnam--by explaining why things happen rather than by trying to defend all American policies and excuse all mistakes. Indeed, we realized that we could welcome such questions because we could point out how the American political process works--for example, how the strong popular reaction against involvement in Vietnam clearly influenced our political decisionmakers. We came to know each other's special interests and areas of knowledge, which enabled us to refer questions to one another during the debates' question periods. And we came to know our differences. One of the most effective ways of showing Soviets the value of individuals' opinions in the U.S. was for representatives from the U.S. like us to publicly disagree about particular U.S. policies.

With the aid of a recent emigree from the Soviet Union, we translated our speeches into Russian. Ludmila's help was invaluable not only because we could be sure that our Russian translations captured the nuances of our English speeches, but also because we gained insight into how Soviets would react.

For example, my speech originally began with a reference to Tolstoy's deterministic view of history, stating that Americans believe in the individual's ability to control his own destiny. This incorrectly implied that Soviet philosophy accepts the Tolstoyan view; I changed the speech to make clear that, although the Soviets have rejected Tolstoy's determinism, they believe in

the importance of the individual only as one moves the masses, and this is still foreign to Americans. My speech attempted to show that, despite differences such as this between Soviet and American history and society, we nonetheless share a desire for peace. The wording I had used to introduce a brief section praising the Soviets' efforts and recognizing their suffering in the second world war apparently seemed to minimize that experience by equating their Great Patriotic War with our World War II. Since my aim was precisely the opposite--to show that I recognize and try to understand the greater degree to which the war affected them--I changed the wording to avoid putting our countries' experiences on an equal level. I would have lost credibility quickly by asserting that Americans understand war as the Soviets do.

So, armed with a sense of purpose, with confidence in our speeches and in our ability to handle questions, with a growing team spirit, with American gifts for our opponents and our hosts, and with a television documentary crew of five, we set off for Moscow.

II. THE DEBATES

Each debate consisted of a ten-minute speech by each of the six participants, fifteen minutes of cross-questioning between the teams, about a half-hour of questions from the audience (mainly directed at the American team), and a five-minute closing summary by each side.

A. The Speeches

One purpose of my speech was to point out that Americans and Soviets do share a common goal of peace. This is not controversial and was not likely to inspire lively argument, but Soviets (as well as Americans) need to be reminded that our disagreement is not about the goal of peace but about the means of achieving peace. John and especially Bill did try to spark some debate alone those lines. As Bill invariably pointed out in our team's brief concluding statement, we have to discuss our differences so that we can understand them and eventually resolve them.

During the trip, I added two paragraphs to my speech to clarify and emphasize two points. One paragraph expanded on the marketplace of ideas theory. My speech originally had assumed that Soviets agree that a variety of opinions is valuable. There is, after all, a Russian proverb that truth is born in argument. But if that principle were as clear to Soviets as it is to Americans, there would have to be a greater diversity of opinion in the Soviet Union than there is. So I tried to make the point obvious but inoffensive: Only when each person can present his

opinion can we hope to find truth, and when a society does not openly present, discuss, and exchange opinions, it is impossible to be sure that we have found the truth.

A second added paragraph dealt with what we mean by peace. Peace is not just the absence of war, but also includes the security of living without threat to our systems of values. I really wanted to say that no society should try to impose its values on another society; both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. must accept that premise if there is to be peace. On a certain level, however, I myself find this difficult to accept. Don't I want Soviets to accept our values of free speech, press, travel, and so on? I can reconcile my evangelism about the American way of life only by claiming that a society like the Soviet Union that does not share our basic values poses a threat to societies that do, or by claiming that the Soviet people are subjected to values that they do not choose. Neither answer is wholly satisfying, of course, because each society may see threats from other different societies--the Soviets have every reason to feel threatened by the U.S.--and because societies must reflect the values of their people. But the bottom line always supports my missionary attitude towards Soviets: Individuals in American society that are dissatisfied with the overall quality of American life can openly, outspokenly work for change, and in the extreme can leave the U.S. to find a more compatible lifestyle elsewhere; Americans may not always take advantage of these opportunities, but Soviets do not even have such opportunities.

In the Soviet teams' speeches, to a large degree, the same

propagandistic catch-phrases about the U.S. arose at each debate: the military-industrial complex, war propaganda, dropping the atomic bombs in Japan, failure to ratify Salt II, racial prejudice, unemployment. Unfortunately, we were not always able to respond to the many accusations--not because we did not have responses but because often we did not have the chance to respond. We rarely deviated from our prepared speeches, other than, for example, to add a few Estonian phrases in Tartu, to refer to the impact on us of visiting war memorials and the impact on the city of the war itself in Volgograd, and to say that we were glad to return to our "alma mater", Leningrad State University, in Leningrad. Since our speeches did not directly respond to the usual negative characterizations of America, we tried to hit those points in our questions to the opposing team, or in our answers to questions from our opponents or the audience.

B. The Questions

Mike Hazen, our coach, suggested a helpful two-step approach to dealing with the Soviets' accusations: (1) Is the accusation true? (2) Don't the Soviets do the same thing? Usually, it seemed, we could "score" on one or both of these steps. Because the scope of the debates was virtually unlimited we did often succeed in turning the discussion to our advantage. Some particularly memorable examples follow.

Baku. Our second debate was in Baku, Azerbaidjan, at a pedagogical institute of foreign languages. At a luncheon

banquet before the debate, each member of our team was "cornered" by a Soviet: Our local host Misha got John; our constant companion Alyosha (our host and organizer throughout the trip) went after Bill; and an observer from Moscow, Aleksandr--a quintessential KCB type--took me and Mike (whose inability to speak Russian kept him largely out of the argument, despite the aid of his translator, Katya). My group discussed exchanges of tourists and students, a topic I intended to raise as a question at the debates. Aleksandr mentioned some Soviet group that was denied visas to New York to protest something or other at the U.N. Since I knew nothing about this, I tried to redirect the issue to exchanges of non-political groups and individuals. I explained how I had first visited the Soviet Union on an eight-week language program with 150 other American students (a program that continues every year, despite events like Afghanistan), and how I had also led hundreds and seen thousands of the American tourists that come to the Soviet Union every year--why are there no similar trips in the other direction? Aleksandr persisted with his U.N. group, but because in paranoid moments we considered such cornering to have been a concerted effort to wear us down, I made it clear that he was missing my point and I refused to let him bother me.

Undaunted by Aleksandr, at the debate I did ask my question about travel and study abroad, explaining my personal knowledge of and participation in such exchanges. the Soviet respondent eventually mentioned the same U.N. visa incident to explain why so few Soviets come to America. To make the point Aleksandr refused to see, I said that I don't care about official or

politically oriented visits, but whereas many foreign language teachers in the U.S. have spent time abroad to perfect their language ability, why are opportunities so few for you future language teachers to live and study abroad? The only possible answer would have to do with foreign currency--but then it becomes a question of government priorities.

In retrospect, this discussion reflects the approach I liked to take with Soviets. It does little good for "everyday folks" like me and the Soviet audiences to second-guess a political decision to deny visas to potentially disruptive groups (the Soviets were not the only group denied entry in Aleksandr's U.N. example, I later learned). But an exchange of future foreign language teachers is not--or should not be--a political event. If we could improve the quantity and quality of such exchanges, we could improve our understanding of each other, and ideally, our acceptance of each other.

Volgograd. In Volgograd at our third debate, we felt a bit uncomfortable about talking about war and peace to descendants of the survivors of the seige of Stalingrad. I was therefore a bit wary when a question from the audience was directed at me, but the question turned out to be one that I knew how to handle: Isn't money what really counts in the United States, so how could we say that all individuals influence our government? I responded that money isn't everything. For example, contrary to popular belief in the Soviet Union, education in America is not totally dependent on ability to pay. Free public education is available trhough high school, and a wide variety of

opportunities for higher education do not depend on money. State universities and community colleges offer inexpensive higher education, and at both public and private institutions financial aid programs enable students to enroll regardless of financial status. Government-backed loans, scholarships, work-study opportunities as well as regular part-time jobs ensure that even at expensive universities like mine students are admitted on the basis of merit rather than money. And this principle is so strong that individuals and businesses donate money to higher education institutions to preserve the availability of quality higher education to all.

When discussing this example with Americans, of course, I would have to admit the imperfections of the reality of this ideal. For instance, it is easier to go to college if you have money, the quality of education is generally considered to be better at private schools, and students who have to work during school have less time for study and valuable extra-curricular activities. Nonetheless, the reality does equal the ideal that anyone who really wants higher education can get it. And in concrete terms, the United States, with a somewhat smaller population than the U.S.S.R., has twice as many students in higher education as the U.S.S.R. In short, this is just an example of how money is not everything. Individuals do not have to have money to influence their own lives or to influence their government. Again, in the United States, I would have to recognize that money can certainly help one speak more loudly to the government. But because of the need to overcome strong

Soviet presumptions, I emphasized the positive aspects of American life.

Kiev. At each of our two debates in Kiev, we faced teams composed of older "students", well-versed in the Communist "party line". At one informal gathering, I found myself discussing U.S. civil rights trends with a debater who was a college-level instructor and a specialist in the subject. Another opponent was professional journalist, clearly well over thirty, and quite knowledgeable about the U.S.--or at least one perspective of it. At the debate, this man took pleasure in pointing out how the International Herald Tribune, a newspaper put out by the New York Times and the Washington Post, barely recognized the Soviets' participation in World War II on the anniversary of the end of the war in Europe, but included all sorts of negative information about the Soviet Union. Bill argued back that the International Herald Tribune is not published in the United States--though if we wanted to show what kind of information our mass media provides, we should have pointed out that the International Herald Tribune is not read in the United States--and that at any rate, it is not an official government publication. I added that we have a wide variety of print media in the U.S., both foreign and domestic, ranging from anti to neutral to pro U.S.S.R., offering even within a publication a wide variety of views. So our opponent's singling out information from one source such as the International Herald Tribune does not represent the whole of American mass media. Moreover, it shows how skewed one's view becomes when defrived from a single source--i.e., as from the

single-voiced government news service in the U.S.S.R.

Tartu. In Tartu, we had different expectations of the opposing team, realizing that the Estonians do not especially like being Soviets. I felt that it was a little unfair to attack Soviet policies, because our opponents would have no choice but to defend them. To accomodate their position, John and I changed our speeches somewhat, from "you" to "the Soviets". We also had the benefit of age and experience, for it turned out that our opponents were younger than us--the only such team. Had the entire audience not been more sympathetic to us here than in other cities, I would feel that we really did score points. But we didn't need so much to score points in Tartu: We felt that they already understood what we were trying to say.

Despite the likelihood that we would force our opponents into an uncomfortable position, we went at the debate with our usual enthusiasm. After hearing the usual references in the Soviet speeches to American "war propaganda", I used the question-answer period to ask about it: I have never seen tanks or missiles in national holiday parades; we have very few uniformed police, militia, or other armed forces around, especially in comparison with the Soviet Union; we have no draft; and we have no posters or billboards urging that capitalism will win. What do Soviets mean by war propaganda? The audience reaction to the question--a bit of a laugh--suggested that they understood my point. The real propaganda may be the Soviets' own practices, and their assertions about American war propaganda. The respondent referred to the power of the military industrial

complex, and to a statement by Alexander Haig to the effect that there are things in life more important than peace. Although I did not then have the chance to pursue that, later someone from the audience asked what Haig might have meant. I answered that I don't know what Haig meant, but I agree that some things in life are more important than peace. For me, freedom is more important: freedom to go where I want, say what I want, read what I want, live where I want. That freedom is so important to me that it is worth fighting to protect.

That was an effective answer--it even drew applause! But I was glad for a later opportunity to go into greater depth. As we rode to the airport on our last day, our host from the Moscow headquarters of the Committee of Youth Societies, Andrei, brought up the conversation with Mike and me. Although he was in his thirties and had not lived through the war, Andrei felt that he knew about the horror of war and wondered how one could really choose freedom over peace, especially if it came down to children's lives. I looked straight at him and replied: I believe in God, and in a better life after life on earth, and if life on earth is not what it should be, the strife for a better life on earth is worth fighting and dying for. Andrei was startled by that; it really is a foreign idea to modern atheistic Soviets, and perhaps somewhat unique to me. A much stronger argument occurred to me later: But isn't fighting to preserve a way of life precisely what the Soviets did in the Great Patriotic War, which they so revere today? In short, Soviets too have found something more important than peace.

III. THE TOURS

Incidents in the debates were not the heaviest, most dramatic points of our trip, although some of Bill's arguments were very involved and very heated, but neither were they the most relaxing and light-hearted fun. When we were not debating, our hosts treated us very well, trying to show us their cities and trying to show us a good time.

A. War Memorials

During each of my previous trips to the Soviet Union, I had visited memorials to those who died in The Great Patriotic War, but never had these memorials affected me as during this trip. Perhaps it was the theme of the debates, perhaps it was that our small group made possible personalized tours and detailed explanations of the monuments, perhaps it was being in Volgograd early in the tour--for some reason, I was deeply impressed with the significance of war memories to Soviets.

Leningrad. I had been to Leningrad several times before this trip, and each time had visited the Piskarevskoye Cemetery and had passed by a relatively new monument on the main highway leading towards Moscow. But this time, we toured these monuments in greater detail, and our guides showed us pictures and films of Leningrad during the war. Reading children's diaries and seeing starving families struggling to fortify barricades made the huge mass graves at the cemetery all the more real, and helped me to understand why Leningraders, not just tourists, would come to the

Cemetery on such a cold and rainy day. As is inscribed on the stone wall behind the eternal flame there, "noone will be forgotten, nothing will be forgotten."

Volgograd. Volgograd, a city I had not toured before, is itself a war memorial. Our excursion around town, included visiting an obelisk with an eternal flame guarded by school children with weapons and military uniforms, a new panorama museum dramatizing the seige of Stalingrad, and on the same grounds the remnants of a bombed our building. But even in combination, the impact of these memorials did not equal that of Mamaev Kurgan, the Statue-of-Liberty-size statue of Mother Volga. With sword held high and ourstretched arms, with head flung back as if shouting to her comrades "Onward!", Mamaev's gigantic features are grotesque but inspirational. Standing atop a hill overlooking the city and the Volga River, the statue alone makes a simple statement about the fervent patriotism and immense suffering that the Soviets experienced in the war. But in combination with the other parts of the memorial, the statue's simple statement is drowned out. The long poplar-lined walk up to the memorial quietly emphasizes the statue, but then the visitor is bombarded: First there is a fountain with a sculpture of struggling figures; then a stairway on the walls of which are carved slogans and war figures, with sounds of battle blaring out over a loudspeaker; then a reflecting pool guarded by stone sentinels and more carved mottoes; then another stone wall on which is carved a long patriotic epitaph; then there is a dark passageway into the side of the hill which opens into a circular,

open-air room with an eternal flame guarded by live sentinels and long lists of names of war dead all around the walls. Seeing all those names and then emerging to approach Mamaev Kurgan herself, one cannot help but be moved by this combination of unsubtle messages.

The messages were so overwhelming that I had to keep thinking about how serious all this was to Soviets. Perhaps my urge to make fun of this overstated reverence to the war was an attempt to escape from the reality of the Soviets' hardship. But our guide, a young woman about my age, had trouble controlling her emotions in a different way. The stories she told us about the war years clearly affected her as if she had lived through that time, bringing tears to her voice and pain to her face. Her reaction, more than any memorial, convinced me both that the Soviets' glorification of the war effort creates a strong, fiercely patriotic force that Americans must reckon with, and that the Soviets did suffer tremendously, to an extent that most Americans cannot imagine, and therefore as a group Soviets probably do have a better understanding of war than do Americans. On my previous trips, I had seen the Soviets' continuing emphasis on the second world war primarily as a propaganda device to convince the Soviet citizenry that only Americans, who have not known war, could ever initiate any armed conflict between our countries. But this trip showed me that the Soviet experience was so devastating, so horrendous, that the Soviets cannot put it out of their minds, and that remembering it as the Soviets do may help avoid repeating it.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn believes that because American

society is oriented towards achieving "the good life", we are incapable of countering the Communist threat. This trip caused me to wonder whether he may be right: Are we tough enough to suffer for our ideals? Solzhenitsyn thinks that our lack of experience in war and suffering leaves us unprepared to make sacrifices--that is, we are not willing to go to war to protect our way of life. The Soviets, in contrast, think that our lack of experience leaves us unaware of the horrors of war--that is, we are too willing to go to war. I still believe--perhaps naively, perhaps just hopefully--that one need not have suffered personally to understand how others have suffered. Seeing explicit pictorial television and magazine coverage of war is not the same as living through the event, but it can convince the viewer of the horrors of war. We must achieve a balance between those two extreme positions: ready to fight for our democratic ideals, yet determined to seek alternative means to protect our system of values.

B. Wining and Dining

In addition to the strong impressions we received from visits to war memorials, our hosts tried to impress us by wining, dining, and showing off their best to us. At times, the schedule was so hectic that it was easy to become paranoid and think that our hosts were trying to wear us down. But overall, I think they just wanted to do their best to please us.

Baku. In Baku, we arrived midday, exhausted from sitting up in an airport all night, but after time to freshen up, we began a

nonstop pace from one banquet or reception to the next. First was an elaborate banquet in a special national Azerbaidjan restaurant, with abundant national dishes and wines, cognac, and vodka--and abundant toasts. Then we were received by the director of medical services for Azerbaidjan, who offered us strong demitasse coffee, fruits, and fancy sweets. We next visited a champagne factory, where, at a typical Soviet "degustatsia"--more an excuse for giving toasts than a wine-tasting--we sampled three champagnes and more fruits and nuts, and were each presented with a bottle of the factory's sweet pink champagne. On the way to our final elaborate banquet for the day, we climbed into quaint horse-drawn carriages to ride up the hill to the "Palace of Joy". In between the champagne and caviar and more Azerbaidjani delicacies, we watched a Soviet version of a Las Vegas floor show, and even had a chance to dance ourselves. The next day was similarly scheduled, ending with a delightful reception with students after our debate. Their openness and curiosity about American life were the high point of our stay in Baku. That two days was exhausting, but we certainly had enough delicious food to fuel our tired bodies!

Tallin and Tartu, Estonia. In Tallin, our hosts seemed aware of the pace of the trip. Our excursion around the city included a leisurely walk through the old town, with a stop for hot mulled wine in a cafe dug into the side of the hill. We had time to relax in the Finnish-built hotel's sauna before attending "Carmen". The warmly colored costumes and set, the top-quality music (sung in Estonian), and the intermission promenade all

reflected the warmth we felt from Estonia in general. At a late supper, we had the chance to chat with our host's wife--the only spouse we met on the trip. After our debate in Tartu the next day, we had time to become acquainted with our opponents, at a brief informal reception followed by tours of Tartu University's large modern library and of an historical museum, and then at another reception at a new national-style restaurant. This interaction was the best part of our already wonderful stay in Estonia--we were able to show our young opponents that we were not tough professionals as we may have appeared to them in the debate, but thinking, feeling individuals.

Kiev. After the open hospitality of places like Baku and Tallin, Kiev seemed less pleasant, even though I had always loved the city on previous trips. I am sure that our hosts made a good faith effort to show us a good time, but we were just too worn out to appreciate it. The first evening we went to a "disco" with our two all-male opposing debate teams; the entertainment included a slide show history of Kiev (a 1500 year old city!), ballroom dance performances by a champion Ukrainian duo, and cartoons. The next day we visited a super-hard materials factory--that is, we listened to its director for an hour and walked through the factory museum. Then we went to the Lenin museum, which I expected to be an art or history museum named after Lenin but was instead devoted to Lenin's life and work. That evening we went to a concert of modern Ukrainian pop and folk music--the lead performer sang too loudly, but the mime act was quite amusing (I did not have to strain to understand it!).

After our second debate, John and I declined to visit the Archbishop of Kiev--our written schedule indicated that this visit had been arranged at our request but we had made no such request--and, tagged conspicuously by the film crew, we had a fantastic time walking around the city. We rejoined Mike and Bill--whose visit to the Archbishop convinced them that he was a Soviet puppet, if not KGB--and visited a young pioneer day camp. This beautiful facility offered a wide variety of day care and after-school activities; one group performed a revolutionary song for us, not unlike what a group of American children might do, but then a boy recited a rousing poem about local workers being shot in the Revolution, and suddenly other evidence of indoctrination became more obvious to me. At the final banquet, however, our hostess ended our stay in Kiev on a positive note. In a toast, she related a story about a man seeking the best place to live. He found peace, which was good, but peace was not enough; then he found happiness, but that was not enough either. Then he found friendship, and that is where he stayed, because where there is friendship, there is both peace and happiness. To friendship!

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This debate trip provided a unique opportunity for a trio of young Americans to present American views to large groups of Soviet young people. Often the Soviets' reactions seemed to be incredulity, derision, embarrassment, offense; at those times, I am afraid that we may have lost or considerably undermined any chance of opening their minds to our foreign ideas. As an American, I try to be open to new ideas. But it is very hard for me to look at a different society without imposing my own society's values on that foreign society. It is even more difficult for Soviets to do so, because they lack a tradition of constantly challenging and reevaluating their government, which forms and is formed by society.

In my speech, I urged the listeners to live according to their consciences. I stated that such contacts as this debate not only help us understand one another, but also help us move closer together. The degree to which any person's views should be changed in this process depends on his conscience. I am afraid the point was too subtle, too obscurely worded, but I wanted to suggest that an open mind would see the value of freedom; that if Soviets followed their consciences they would try to express new ideas, to question accepted policies, and to influence their government.

One of the most frustrating and at the same time gladdening experiences for me has been when Americans challenge me with the same points Soviets might raise. It is frustrating, because it is so hard to communicate my strong, mixed feelings about the

Soviet Union to Americans who have not met, confronted, and befriended Soviets as I have. But it is gladdening because of the very fact that Americans are free to challenge our government and our society's values. And if we really care, we can do more than vocalize our concerns; we can work to change things.

My feelings about Soviets waver between hopeless acceptance, and sympathy or even pity. At times, I feel that if the Soviets are willing to put up with their system, then I should not wish my values upon them. If they want guaranteed jobs so long as they do not counter the government, then let them have it; I should not choose for them their system of values. But at other times, I realize that Soviets themselves do not have a fair choice. Soviets are people with the same inherent needs as Americans; just like us, they have a certain need to express their individuality. That need is fostered and encouraged in the United States; the need for individual self-fulfillment is one of the theories underlying our treasured First Amendment. In the Soviet Union, however, that need is not so respected and it is not so satisfied. Both the State and individual Soviets suppress the need for self-fulfillment--Soviet life is easier that way. But perhaps some of the Soviets in our audiences had not completely stifled that inherent need. Perhaps some will think honestly about what we said, will look critically at their society, and will help further the slow process of mutual understanding that is necessary to ensure lasting peace.